

HUNDRED AIRPLANES SHOT DOWN IN FIGHT

British and Germans Wage Battle in Clouds on Scale Heretofore Unknown.

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Tentons Reported to Have Lost 56 Machines—Troop Movements Observed.

LONDON, April 7.—Fighting in the air, a scale hitherto unknown in the history of war took place Thursday and Friday above the trenches and behind the German lines in France. More duels between single machines, battles between squadrons, bombing raids and reconnaissance took place in forty-eight hours than occur usually in as many days. Exactly one hundred aircraft of German and Allies were brought to earth.

The British brought it on by what was nothing less than a great offensive in the air, and Sir Douglas Haig reports that the British came out best. Fifty-six of the German machines were shot down, and the British lost only twenty-eight. The French War Office has not yet reported on its share of the fighting, which may have been exclusively between German and British.

Aside from the fact that their bag of German machines was greater than their loss, the British gained far more important and valuable results from their air drive. British aviators gained almost complete information concerning the whereabouts, strength, fortifications and all details of the new German line—the Hindenburg line. They were able to ascertain what troop movements were going on behind the German lines and whether, as rumored, German troops had been sent from the line to hammer the new Russian republic.

Tons of Bombs Dropped.

The British official report to-night gives such figures as stagger the imagination. Flying many miles to the German rear, almost to the border of Germany, British aviators dropped tons of bombs. German troops were killed, and German communications were cut. More than eight tons of bombs were dropped. British aviators took more than 1,700 photographs behind the German lines showing the nature of their defenses for hundreds of miles.

"All the time intense fighting between large formations took place," says the British statement. "The nature of these fights was so different from the fact that German airmen were seen to fall from their machines, out of control thousands of feet in air. Of the forty-five airplanes brought down fifteen were seen to crash, the technical term for a known total wreck, and thirty-one others were driven down damaged. The German statement is less explicit, simply claiming that forty-four were brought down, thirty-three in air fights. Berlin admits only five machines missing. The British report does not say whether the Germans succeeded in hitting the British again. The official statement for the day is as follows:

French aviators also made a raid on German positions and various works on which 40 kilograms of bombs were dropped.

Infantry fighting and activity on the ground generally was entirely secondary to-day, though the British made a local attack which places them still nearer to St. Quentin from the northwest. During last night they gained ground at points two or three miles from the city, and reached the outskirts of Fresnoy-le-Petit, along the La Cateau road. The British artillery bombarded the city, but the infantry did not move.

Small Gains by French.

On other parts of the new front the French made small progress, and east of Rheims, northwest of Rheims, captured some more of their lost trenches. The Germans bombarded the city of Rheims heavily, as they usually do after an Allied success, throwing into the city during the last twenty-four hours 7,000 shells. They killed fifteen Frenchmen and wounded many. The French report does not say whether the Germans succeeded in hitting the British again. The official statement for the day is as follows:

British—"In the neighborhood of St. Quentin our troops gained ground during the night at a number of points between the villages of Selency and Jeancourt and reached the outskirts of Fresnoy-le-Petit."

"There was considerable artillery activity on both sides to-day in the neighborhood of Arras and in the Ypres sector."

"During the days and night of April 5 and 6 our aviators have been very active, continually harassing the enemy's communications a long way in the rear and seeking out his fighting machines at a considerable distance behind his lines. Large tracts of the enemy's country for many miles in the rear have been photographed, and 1,700 photographs being taken behind the enemy's lines."

"Cooperation with the artillery continued during the day, and the usual event by the weather, although repeated attempts were made by the enemy to prevent this important work."

Seventeen successful bomb raids were carried out on enemy airfields, ammunition depots and railways a long distance behind the lines in addition to numerous small raids. A total of more than eight tons of bombs were dropped.

"All the time intense fighting between large formations took place. Our casualties are twenty-eight machines missing, a large number of which are known to have been shot down in combat over the enemy's country."

"It is known that the enemy suffered very heavy casualties. In one case an observer was seen to fall out of his machine, which went down, out of control, in a spin. In another case the fighting was so close that an enemy pilot was seen to fall from his machine, which was out of control and diving by the enemy. Fifteen hostile machines were shot down and actually seen to crash to the ground, and thirty-one others were driven down damaged, a large proportion of which must have been totally destroyed. In addition ten hostile balloons were brought down in flames."

French Statement.

French night statement—"Quite spirited artillery actions occurred to-day at various points along the front, especially between the Somme and the Oise, south of the Ailette River and in the region to the northwest of Rheims."

"In the Argonne a surprise attack by the enemy against our trenches in the valley of the Aire was repulsed after hard fighting."

"According to late reports the Germans fired to-day and last night 7,500 shells into Rheims, fifteen civilians being killed and many wounded."

Belgian—"In the region of Hettas the Belgian batteries successfully shelled the enemy works. There was artillery activity on the whole of the Belgian front."

French day statement—"The front of the Somme was quiet to-day."

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"While the Entente makes no pretensions to world domination, Germany has clearly shown its intention to establish the old rights of nations no longer exist; that the races fighting against her are in a state of complete decadence; that Germany's task is to institute a new order of the rights of nations—to reorganize Europe in accordance with her own interests."

"In these conditions Germany has constituted a unique and serious obstacle in the way of establishing definitive frontiers and developing normal international relations. Only a victory over Germany will make it possible for President Wilson's desires to be fulfilled."

"The President expressed himself not merely with reference to the general aims but to the concrete aims of the war, namely, the liberation of nations, particularly Poland, and the assertion of the right of nations to the freedom of the seas."

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"None of the Allies indulges in aims of usurpation. We all desire that the territories wrecked by force shall be restored and that frontiers shall be definitely established in accordance with nationality. In other words, the Entente Powers will be able to consider their victory complete only when they have attained the fundamental conditions of the President's programme—the transformation of the map of Europe, especially to the southeast, upon lines which will insure durable peace and eliminate every pretext for new conflict."

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